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House panel swiftly takes up gun bill after mass shootings

By KEVIN FREKING

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is swiftly working to put its stamp on gun legislation in response to mass shootings in Texas and New York by 18-year-old assailants who used semi-automatic rifles to kill 31 people, including 19 children.

Debate on the legislation came as the the White House announced that President Joe Biden would give a prime-time speech about the shootings and his plans to press Congress "to pass commonsense laws to combat the epidemic of gun violence that is taking lives every day."

Partisan positions were clear at a Judiciary Committee hearing Thursday on

legislation that would raise the age limit for purchasing semi-automatic rifles from 18 to 21. The bill also would make it a federal offense to import, manufacture or possess large-capacity magazines and would create a grant program to buy back such magazines.

It also builds on the administration's executive action banning fast-action "bump-stock" devices and "ghost guns" that are assembled without serial numbers.

The Democratic legislation, called the Protecting Our Kids Act, was quickly added to the legislative docket after last week's school shooting in Uvalde, Texas.

Continued on next page



Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, speaks in support of Democratic gun control measures, called the Protecting Our Kids Act, in response to mass shootings in Texas and New York, at the Capitol in Washington, Thursday, June 2, 2022.

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Continued from front

Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., promised in a letter to Democratic colleagues Thursday that the House will vote on the measure next week, and she promised other votes in the weeks ahead, including on a bill to create an AMBER Alert-style notification during a mass shooting. Pelosi also pledged a hearing on a bill banning military-style semiautomatic rifles.

But with Republicans nearly all in opposition, the House action will mostly be symbolic, merely putting lawmakers on record about gun control ahead of this year's elections. The Senate is taking a different course, with a bipartisan group striving toward a compromise on gun safety legislation that can win enough GOP support to become law. Those talks are making "rapid progress," according to Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, one of the Republican negotiators.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, defended his chamber's proposals as popular with most Americans. He dismissed Republican criticism.

"You say that it is too soon to take action? That we are 'politicizing' these tragedies to enact new policies?" Nadler said. "It has been 23 years since Columbine. Fifteen years since Virginia Tech. Ten years since Sandy Hook. Seven years since Charleston. Four years since Parkland and Santa Fe and Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh."

"Too soon? My friends, what the hell are you waiting for?"



House Judiciary Committee Chair Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., top center, speaks and Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, top right, the ranking member, listens as the panel holds a markup session at the Capitol in Washington, Sept. 13, 2021.

Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the top Republican on the committee, said no one wants another tragedy. But he insisted the House bill would do nothing to stop mass shootings.

"We need to get serious about understanding why this keeps happening. Democrats are always fixated on curtailing the rights of law-abiding citizens rather than trying to understand why this evil happens," Jordan said. "Until we figure out the why, we will always mourn losses without facing the problem. Our job is to figure out the why."

A chief feature of the House bill requires those buying semi-automatic weapons to be at least 21. Only six states require someone to be at least 21 years old to buy rifles and shotguns. The shooters in Uvalde and Buf-

falo, New York, both were 18 and used an AR-15-style weapon.

Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., said that it should be a red flag when an 18-year-old wants to buy "an assault weapon."

"That's what they want on their 18th birthday is an assault weapon? They've got a problem, which means we've got a problem, which means those 19 kids and their parents and those two teachers have a problem, forever," Cohen said, referring to the victims in Uvalde.

Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., pointed to a U.S. appeals court ruling last month, however, that found California's ban on the sale of semiautomatic weapons to adults under 21 unconstitutional.

"I can tell you this, and let

me be clear, you are not going to bully your way to stripping Americans of fundamental rights," Bishop said.

The hearing featured emotional pleas from Democratic lawmakers for Congress to respond to the mass shootings after years of gridlock on gun issues, one of the most riveting coming from Rep. Lucy McBath of Georgia.

She recalled how her son, Jordan, was shot and killed at a gas station by a man who complained about the loud music he was listening to. She said she dreams of who he would have become. She said racial bias led to his death and those of 10 Black Americans in Buffalo last month and is "being replayed with casual callousness and despicable frequency" in the

United States.

"We all understand that the murder of our children cannot continue," McBath said. "And we have solutions that a majority of American people believe in. They are common-sense compromises that will keep American children alive."

Several lawmakers participated in the hearing remotely, including Rep. Greg Steube, R-Fla., who brandished various pistols in arguing that the bill's provision banning large-capacity magazines of more than 10 rounds amounted to stopping law-abiding citizens from purchasing guns of their choice.

When Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, remarked that she hoped one of the guns Steube was holding was not loaded, Steube replied, "I'm in my house, I can do whatever I want with my guns." It was one of several pointed exchanges during the hearing.

Any legislative response to the Uvalde and Buffalo shootings will have to get through the evenly divided Senate, where support from at least 10 Republicans would be needed to advance the measure to a final vote. A group of senators has been working privately this week in hopes of finding a consensus.

Ideas under discussion include expanding background checks for gun purchases and incentivizing red-flag laws that allow family members, school officials and others to go into court and secure orders requiring the police to seize guns from people considered threats to themselves or others. □

Associated Press



Airport workers receive JetBlue flight 387, the first commercial flight between the U.S. and Cuba in more than a half century, holding a United States, and a Cuban national flag, on the airport tarmac Wednesday, Aug. 31, 2016 in Santa Clara, Cuba.

Associated Press

U.S. Transportation Dept. lifts restrictions on Cuba flights

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Transportation Department on Wednesday made it easier for Americans to travel to Cuba, lifting flight restrictions that were established during the Trump administration.

The restrictions had prevented U.S. airline flights and chartered flights from going to Cuban cities other than Havana. Secretary of State Antony Blinken sent a

letter to the Transportation Department on Tuesday asking it to revoke the restrictions, and the agency followed through Wednesday.

Blinken said opening up flights to Cuba was "in support of the Cuban people and in the foreign policy interests of the United States." He said that once the Transportation Department followed through on

his request, "scheduled and charter air services between the United States and Cuban airports may resume effective immediately." The Biden administration announced last month that it would expand flights to Cuba, take steps to loosen restrictions on U.S. travelers to the island, and lift restrictions on money that immigrants can send to people on the island. □

Go-broke dates pushed back for Social Security, Medicare

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN** and **TOM MURPHY**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A stronger-than-expected economic recovery from the pandemic has pushed back the go-broke dates for Social Security and Medicare, but officials warn that the current economic turbulence is putting additional pressures on the bedrock retirement programs.

The annual Social Security and Medicare trustees report released Thursday says Social Security's trust fund will be unable to pay full benefits in 2035, instead of last year's estimate of 2034. The year before that it estimated an exhaustion date of 2035. The projected depletion date for Medicare's trust fund for inpatient hospital care moved back two years to 2028 from last year's forecast of 2026.

"Economic recovery from the 2020 recession has been stronger and faster than assumed in last year's reports, with positive effects on the projected actuarial status of the trust funds in these reports," the report states.

Forecasters said in the report released Thursday that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will have no net effect on their long-range projections. But they also noted that assumptions for their latest report were made in February, which was before cases began climbing again nationally and inflation jumped.

Social Security pays benefits to more than 65 million Americans, mainly retirees



A Social Security card is displayed on Oct. 12, 2021, in Tigard, Ore.

Associated Press

as well as disabled people and survivors of deceased workers. Medicare covers roughly 64 million older and disabled people.

Income for Medicare's hospital insurance fund is projected to be higher than estimates from last year because the number of covered workers who help fund it and their average wages are both expected to be higher.

A main source of financing is payroll taxes on earnings paid by employees and employers. About 183 million people paid those taxes in 2021.

The report projects the Medicare "Part B" premium for outpatient coverage to remain stable at \$170.10 a month. But administration officials said that projection, based on information from earlier this year,

doesn't reflect an expected drop due to an overestimation of the cost of covering the Alzheimer's treatment Aduhelm.

The impact of the economic recovery on the trust funds has been resoundingly positive, which was stronger and faster than expected, a Treasury official said Thursday on the condition of anonymity during a call with reporters.

The trustees of Social Security and Medicare include the secretaries of Treasury, Health and Human Services, and Labor, as well as the Social Security commissioner. They are supposed to be joined by two "public trustees," however those positions are currently vacant.

A representative from the White House did not respond to an email inquiry

about whether the president intends to nominate new public trustees.

The trustees report is an added reminder of the U.S. government's financial troubles, as it juggles historically high inflation, recovery from a pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

There was some good news for retirees, however. This year, Social Security retirees got a 5.9% boost in benefits this year, which was the biggest cost-of-living adjustment, also known as COLA, in 39 years.

Ron Thompson Jr, a 24-year-old D.C. resident, says this year's cost of living increase has been "transformational" as a trickle-down benefit to his family, as he helps take care of his 77-year-old grandmother, who lives on the other side of town.

Transportation costs, which

has surged due to high inflation, have made it difficult for Thompson and his mother to drive to take care of his grandmother.

"All of us have experienced high costs," Thompson said. Because his grandmother can pass on some of her Social Security benefits to her daughter to help pay for gasoline costs, "the adjustment is a cushion my mom can rest on" as she travels to care for Thompson's grandmother.

A Treasury official said this year's high inflation could prompt an 8% percent increase in benefits next year.

A new Congressional Budget Office report states that the biggest drivers of debt rising in relation to GDP are increasing interest costs and spending for Medicare and Social Security. An aging population drives those numbers. Charles Balhous, a senior economic adviser to former President George W. Bush and a public trustee of Social Security and Medicare during the Obama administration, told The Associated Press that "the first thing that's important to do is grasp the baseline, it's very dire," he said.

Balhous says failing to finance Social Security and Medicare under its current structure "would subject the programs to perpetual renegotiation," with the threat of benefit cuts or elimination in the future.

"If we were to wait until the 2030s" to take action, "the annual shortfall would be so large — so many times larger that it's not possible to fathom." □

Hinckley, who shot Reagan, says thanks after winning freedom

By **JESSICA GRESKO**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — John Hinckley Jr., who shot President Ronald Reagan in 1981, is saying thank you to the people who helped him win freedom from court oversight.

U.S. District Court Judge Paul L. Friedman had freed Hinckley in September from all remaining restrictions but said his order wouldn't take effect until this month. On Wednesday, the judge held a final hearing in Hinckley's case and said

his release from conditions would occur as planned June 15.

Hinckley, 67, sings and plays guitar and hopes to pursue a music career. He was not at the hearing but wrote a brief thank you Wednesday evening on Twitter.

"A big thank you to everyone who helped me get my unconditional release," he wrote. "What a long strange trip it has been. Now it's time to rock and roll."

On Thursday, the day after the hearing, Hinckley tweeted, "What

this world needs is peace, love and understanding."

In July, Hinckley plans to give a concert in New York City. Appearances in Connecticut and Chicago for what he has called the "John Hinckley Redemption Tour" have been canceled. Hinckley also shares his music on a YouTube channel.

Hinckley was confined to a mental hospital in Washington for more than two decades after a jury found him not guilty by reason of

insanity in shooting Reagan. But he has shown no signs of active mental illness in decades, the judge repeated Wednesday, and has exhibited no violent behavior or interest in weapons.

"He's no longer a danger to himself or others," Friedman repeated Wednesday. In 2003, Friedman began allowing Hinckley to spend longer and longer stretches in the community with requirements like attending therapy and restrictions on where he can travel. □

Oregon dropping AI tool used in child abuse cases

By **SALLY HO AND GARANCE BURKE**
Associated Press

Child welfare officials in Oregon will stop using an algorithm to help decide which families are investigated by social workers, opting instead for a new process that officials say will make better, more racially equitable decisions.

The move comes weeks after an Associated Press review of a separate algorithmic tool in Pennsylvania that had originally inspired Oregon officials to develop their model, and was found to have flagged a disproportionate number of Black children for "mandatory" neglect investigations when it first was in place.

Oregon's Department of Human Services announced to staff via email last month that after "extensive analysis" the agency's hotline workers would stop using the algorithm at the end of June to reduce disparities concerning which families are investigated for child abuse and neglect by child protective services.

"We are committed to continuous quality improvement and equity," Lacey Andresen, the agency's deputy director, said in the May 19 email.

Jake Sunderland, a department spokesman, said the existing algorithm would "no longer be necessary," since it can't be used with the state's new screening process. He declined to provide further details about why Oregon decided to replace the algorithm and would not elaborate on any related disparities that influenced the policy change.

This story, supported by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting, is part of an ongoing Associated Press series, "Tracked," that in-



Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., speaks during a news conference, on Dec. 15, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

vestigates the power and consequences of decisions driven by algorithms on people's everyday lives.

Hotline workers' decisions about reports of child abuse and neglect mark a critical moment in the investigations process, when social workers first decide if families should face state intervention. The stakes are high – not attending to an allegation could end with a child's death, but scrutinizing a family's life could set them up for separation.

From California to Colorado and Pennsylvania, as child welfare agencies use or consider implementing algorithms, an AP review identified concerns about transparency, reliability

and racial disparities in the use of the technology, including their potential to harden bias in the child welfare system.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, said he had long been concerned about the algorithms used by his state's child welfare system and reached out to the department again following the AP story to ask questions about racial bias – a prevailing concern with the growing use of artificial intelligence tools in child protective services.

"Making decisions about what should happen to children and families is far too important a task to give untested algorithms," Wyden said in a statement. "I'm glad the Oregon De-

partment of Human Services is taking the concerns I raised about racial bias seriously and is pausing the use of its screening tool." Sunderland said Oregon child welfare officials had long been considering changing their investigations process before making the announcement last month.

He added that the state decided recently that the algorithm would be completely replaced by its new program, called the Structured Decision Making model, which aligns with many other child welfare jurisdictions across the country.

Oregon's Safety at Screening Tool was inspired by the influential Allegheny Family Screening Tool, which is named for the county surrounding Pittsburgh, and is aimed at predicting the risk that children face of winding up in foster care or being investigated in the future. It was first implemented in 2018. Social workers view the numerical risk

scores the algorithm generates – the higher the number, the greater the risk – as they decide if a different social worker should go out to investigate the family.

But Oregon officials tweaked their original algorithm to only draw from internal child welfare data in calculating a family's risk, and tried to deliberately address racial bias in its design with a "fairness correction."

In response to Carnegie Mellon University researchers' findings that Allegheny County's algorithm initially flagged a disproportionate number of Black families for "mandatory" child neglect investigations, county officials called the research "hypothetical," and noted that social workers can always override the tool, which was never intended to be used on its own.

Wyden is a chief sponsor of a bill that seeks to establish transparency and national oversight of software, algorithms and other automated systems.

"With the livelihoods and safety of children and families at stake, technology used by the state must be equitable -- and I will continue to watchdog," Wyden said. The second tool that Oregon developed – an algorithm to help decide when foster care children can be reunified with their families – remains on hiatus as researchers rework the model. Sunderland said the pilot was paused months ago due to inadequate data but that there is "no expectation that it will be unpaused soon."

In recent years while under scrutiny by a crisis oversight board ordered by the governor, the state agency – currently preparing to hire its eighth new child welfare director in six years – considered three additional algorithms, including predictive models that sought to assess a child's risk for death and severe injury, whether children should be placed in foster care, and if so, where. Sunderland said the child welfare department never built those tools, however. □

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U.N. report: Over 1 million displaced in Myanmar amid violence

By GRANT PECK

BANGKOK (AP) — The United Nations' humanitarian relief agency says the number of people displaced within strife-torn Myanmar has for the first time exceeded 1 million, with well over half the total losing their homes after a military takeover last year.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs says in a report that an already critical situation is being exacerbated by ongoing fighting between the military government and its opponents, the increasing prices of essential commodities, and the coming of monsoon season, while funding for its relief efforts is severely inadequate. Its report covers the situation up to May 26.

The military has hindered or denied independent access to areas not under its control, hampering aid efforts.

Myanmar's army in February last year seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering widespread peaceful protests. When those were put down with lethal force by the army and police, nonviolent opposition turned into armed resistance, and the coun-



Displaced people from Myanmar carry donated lunch boxes to their tents along the Thai side of the Moei River in Mae Sot, Thailand on Feb. 5, 2022.

Associated Press

try slipped into what some U.N. experts characterize as a civil war.

OCHA says that fighting has recently escalated. "The impact on civilians is worsening daily with frequent indiscriminate attacks and incidents involving explosive hazards, including landmines and explosive remnants of war," the report says.

It says that more than 694,300 people have become displaced from their

homes since the army takeover, with thousands being uprooted a second or third time, and an estimated 346,000 people were displaced by fighting before last year's takeover — mostly in frontier regions populated by ethnic minority groups who have been struggling for greater autonomy for decades.

The report also says about 40,200 people have fled to neighboring countries since the takeover and more

than 12,700 "civilian properties," including houses, churches, monasteries and schools are estimated to have been destroyed.

As of the end of the first quarter of this year, humanitarian assistance reached 2.6 million people in Myanmar, or 41% of the 6.2 million people targeted, OCHA says. The country's total population is over 55 million.

But it warns this year's Myanmar Humanitarian

Response Plan is only 10% funded so far, falling short by \$740 million.

An official of the military government's Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement said Wednesday at a news conference in Myanmar's capital Naypyitaw that the government distributed humanitarian aid to more than 130,000 displaced people from May 2021 through May 27 this year.

The official, whose testimony was broadcast but who was not identified by name, said 1,255 houses and five religious buildings were burned or destroyed in fighting between the army and local resistance militias, and consequently received government aid for rebuilding.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said last month that the number of people worldwide forced to flee conflict, violence, human rights violations and persecution has crossed the milestone of 100 million for the first time on record. That's more than 1% of the global population and comprises refugees and asylum-seekers as well as people displaced inside their own countries by conflict. □

N. Korea criticized as it takes helm of U.N. disarmament body

GENEVA (AP) — Dozens of mostly Western countries criticized North Korea's "reckless actions" in its weapons programs as its government on Thursday took over the rotating presidency of the U.N.-backed Conference on Disarmament.

After North Korea's ambassador opened a new session of the 65-nation body, Australian Ambassador Amanda Gorely read a joint statement by 48 countries plus the European Union that expressed concerns about North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities and activities, including reports that it may be preparing to conduct a seventh nuclear test.

She said members of the

conference who joined the statement have decided not to boycott North Korea's presidency, but remain "gravely concerned" about its "reckless actions which continue to seriously undermine the very value" of the body. She said the countries' participation should not be seen as giving any "tacit consent" to North Korea's actions or its "violation of numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions."

France's envoy, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said its members will downgrade the level of their representation at the conference during North Korea's nearly six-week presidency through July 1. Countries such as China, Nigeria, Pakistan and Rus-

sia voiced support for North Korea's presidency.

All member states get a turn at the presidency. In the past, Western countries have at times balked over the accession of some countries, such as when Syria had a turn several years ago. The presidency is largely a symbolic and administrative post and doesn't generally impact the body's proceedings. North Korea is taking over the post from Cuba.

Han Tae Song, North Korea's ambassador, opened the session by recognizing the "honor and privilege" of having the presidency. He urged member countries to work toward "peace and security" and expressed willingness to work with all member states. He said the



This photo provided by the North Korean government, shows what it says a test launch of a hypersonic missile in North Korea Wednesday, Jan. 5, 2022.

Associated Press

comments from Western countries were "nothing new" and no more than "copy-paste" of previous criticisms they have voiced about North Korea's behavior. He insisted that his

country has a right to defend itself and said it is still technically at war with the United States because only a cease-fire, not a peace treaty, halted fighting in the 1950-53 Korean War. □

Afghan Taliban launch campaign to eradicate poppy crop

By **ABDUL KHALIQ**

WASHIR, Afghanistan (AP)

— Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have begun a campaign to eradicate poppy cultivation, aiming to wipe out the country's massive production of opium and heroin, even as farmers fear their livelihoods will be ruined at a time of growing poverty.

On a recent day in Washir district in southern Helmand province, armed Taliban fighters stood guard as a tractor tore up a field of poppies. The field's owner stood nearby, watching.

The Taliban, who took power in Afghanistan more than nine months ago, issued an edict in early April banning poppy cultivation throughout the country.

Those violating the ban "will be arrested and tried according to Sharia laws in relevant courts," the Taliban deputy interior minister for counternarcotics, Mullah Abdul Haq Akhund, told The Associated Press in Helmand's provincial capital, Lashkar Gah.

Afghanistan is the world's biggest opium producer and a major source for heroin in Europe and Asia. Production spiraled over the



Taliban eradicate a poppy field in Washir, district of Helmand province, Afghanistan, Sunday, May 29, 2022.

past 20 years despite billions of dollars spent by the U.S. trying to stop poppy cultivation. But the ban will likely strike a heavy blow to millions of impoverished farmers and day laborers who rely on proceeds from the crop to survive. The ban comes as Afghanistan's economy has collapsed, cut off from international funding in the wake of the

Taliban takeover. Most of the population struggles to afford food, and the country has been suffering under its worst drought in years. Noor Mohammed, who owns one poppy field in Washir that was torn apart by Taliban tractors, said his plot of land is small and lacks water, so he can't survive by growing less profitable crops.

"If we are not allowed to cultivate this crop, we will not earn anything," he said of his poppies.

Day laborers can earn upwards of \$300 a month harvesting opium from the poppies. Villagers often rely on the promise of the upcoming poppy harvest to borrow money for staples such as flour, sugar, cooking oil and heating oil.

Helmand is the heartland of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. It appeared the new eradication campaign was targeting mainly those who planted their crops after the ban was announced. Many others who had planted earlier succeeded in harvesting, going from plant to plant, slicing the poppy's bulb, then scooping up the sap that oozes out, the raw material for opium.

Akhund, the deputy interior minister, said the Taliban were in touch with other governments and non-governmental organizations to work out alternative crops for farmers.

Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Nafi Takor said the eradication campaign will take place across the country. "We are committed to bringing poppy cultivation to zero," he told the AP.

It's not known how many poppies were planted this season, how much was harvested and how many fields the Taliban have eradicated so far.

But Afghanistan's production has steadily risen, reaching new heights every year in recent years. □

Associated Press

Jerusalem holds annual Pride Parade despite threats

By **ISAAC SCHARF**

JERUSALEM (AP)

— Thousands of people attended the annual Jerusalem Pride Parade on Thursday amid heavy protection by Israeli police, who arrested three people suspected of threatening the event.

Past years have seen religious radicals attack participants.

Jerusalem is home to a large ultra-Orthodox Jewish community and other conservative religious groups, and many residents oppose the event.

The Jerusalem parade is much smaller than the yearly festivities in the more liberal Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub on the Mediterranean Sea. Up to 7,000 people attended the Jerusalem march this year, po-

lice said.

Police could be seen deployed on nearby rooftops and a police helicopter hovered overhead. The police said they arrested two suspects with batons, tear gas and gloves in their car who were heading to the parade area.

In 2015, an Israeli man stabbed 16-year-old Shira Banki to death and wounded several others at the Jerusalem Pride Parade; he had recently been released for a similar attack on parade participants in 2005. The attack was widely condemned across Israel's political spectrum.

Earlier Thursday, police said they had apprehended a 21-year-old European citizen residing in Jerusalem on suspicion of sending

threats to an organizer of the parade and to several members of parliament who support LGBTQ rights. The police provided no further details.

"We will not allow the Pride Parade to take place in Jerusalem, the holy city. Shira Banki's fate awaits you," read the threat sent to liberal Labor party lawmaker and longtime LGBTQ-rights supporter Gilad Kariv.

Some members of Israel's ultra-religious community oppose the parade, homosexuality, and LGBTQ rights, and say the event should not take place in the holy city. A far-right anti-LGBTQ group, Lehava, usually stages a counter-protest nearby.

Earlier this week, Israel's defense minister said the



Thousands of people march under heavy security in the annual Pride Parade, in Jerusalem, Thursday, June 2, 2022.

Associated Press

government would consider designating Lehava a terrorist organization for affiliation with the late Rabbi Meir Kahane and his violent, anti-Arab ideology.

Israel has emerged as a major gay-friendly travel destination in recent years, in sharp contrast with the rest of the region, where gays are often persecuted

and even killed. Members of the LGBTQ community serve openly in Israel's military and parliament, and many popular artists and entertainers as well as the country's current health minister are openly gay. But leaders of the LGBTQ community say Israel has a long way to go to promote equality. □

In Argentina, groups keep lid on simmering social conflict

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Holding an empty tote bag, Bahiano Arévalo waits impatiently for his turn at the Little Lions soup kitchen outside Argentina's capital. A few moments later, the 7-year-old receives some milk and cake. He takes it to his mother, Evelin Benítez, who is waiting for him near the entrance to the humble brick home that serves as the soup kitchen in the poverty-stricken Carmen de Alvear neighborhood.

"I come here because I have three children and everything helps," said Benítez, a street sweeper who makes 20,000 pesos (\$159) per month, less than half the minimum wage and not enough to live on in a country with one of the world's highest inflation rates and 37% of its population mired in poverty.

Benítez is one of millions of Argentines who survive largely thanks to soup kitchens and state welfare programs, many of which are funneled through politically powerful social movements linked to the ruling party. Almost a third of Argentine households are estimated to receive some kind of social assistance.

These social organizations do not simply provide food, they also have strong ties to political leaders which facilitates receiving subsidies



Demonstrators walk past a monument of former President Julio Roca during a march to the Plaza de Mayo organized by social organizations demanding more jobs and higher wages, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Thursday, May 12, 2022.

Associated Press

and access to work programs. Benitez got her job as a street sweeper through one such program.

These organizations and assistance programs keep a lid on simmering social unrest in Argentina. Without them, "everything would blow up," said Jorge Cabral, a member of the Frente Popular Darío Santillán, which opened the Little Lions soup kitchen.

Critics of the state's welfare programs ranging from economists to right-leaning politicians say they are a tool used by political leaders to assure votes come

election time. The social groups are intermediaries with the ministries and some of their leaders hold government posts or have close ties to ruling party officials.

But they are a double-edged sword for ruling President Alberto Fernández. On the one hand, they help the neediest survive day-to-day and prevent explosive social conflict. But they also pose a threat to the government because of their ability to organize massive protests for more assistance, and other demands. This power became

evident over the past few weeks, when social organizations held large street protests demanding more work and higher wages.

The life of Benitez, 29, revolves around such combative social movements. Now she is part of Barrios de Pie, but last year she was more heavily involved in Movimiento Evita, another organization. Membership helped her get her job..

"Now I'll go pick up my other two children in preschool and the three will be able to drink warm milk," said a smiling Benítez. If Benítez did not go to this

and other soup kitchens, some opened during the pandemic, her three children, mother and partner would not have enough food to survive at a time of 58% annual inflation, which economists say could grow to 70 percent, or higher, by the end of the year.

"Everything we obtained was because we fought, because we blocked streets," said Cabral of the Darío Santillán Popular Front, which was one of the movements that camped out for days recently on one of the main Buenos Aires avenues demanding more welfare.

Such organizations have long been present in Argentina but they grew and became more powerful at the end of 2001, when the country suffered the worst economic collapse in its history that plunged half the population into poverty. They continue to hold influence and people rely on them for a myriad of welfare programs to subsist.

"Three of every 10 homes in the country are beneficiaries of some kind of welfare program," said Eduardo Donza, researcher at the Social Debt Observatory of the Argentine Catholic University. "If this were not the case, the destitute would go from representing the current 8% of the population to 18%." □

Lack of water in Puerto Rico town sparks federal lawsuit

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico's water and sewer company was hit by a federal lawsuit on Thursday demanding that it provide services to thousands of residents who lack potable water on a daily basis. The class-action lawsuit was filed by Carmen Maldonado, mayor of the northern town of Morovis, who requested that a judge issue an injunction to force Puerto Rico's Aqueducts and Sewer Authority to provide immediate service to residents in need.

The lawsuit represents nearly 1,600 residents and seeks \$1,000 for every day spent without water as compen-

sation, alleging that the lack of water has caused more than \$55 billion in damages.

Maldonado said daily interruptions in water service have long been a problem in Morovis that grew worse after Hurricane Maria hit in September 2017 as a powerful Category 4 storm and razed the U.S. territory's electric grid.

The lawsuit states that every day on average at least three wards within the municipality have no water service.

It also noted that the town has spent more than \$1 million in hiring and deploying water trucks since Janu-

ary 2017. The lawsuit accuses the water and sewer company of blaming the problem on heavy rainfalls, power outages, mechanical failures and other issues. "Every day there is an excuse," it states, adding that the company has not adjusted the bills and that those suing "have a constitutional right to water service."

Daily power outages remain common across Puerto Rico, with officials saying that if power generators are not working, they are unable to pump water.

A spokeswoman for the water and sewer company did not immediately



Jose Luis Gonzalez walks through a ravine known as "La Raja de Rosa," where people from Barrio Patron get their water supply in Morovis, Puerto Rico, Dec. 22, 2017, three months after Hurricane Maria hit.

Associated Press

respond to a message for comment. □

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ORANJESTAD — 2021 was the official Grand Opening of Harbour House Aruba. The residence consisting of 94 units is located in the former Mar Azul building, right in the heart of Oranjestad. The two brothers Irwin J. Perret-Gentil and Alberto Perret-Gentil from PERING, one of the largest, privately-owned Real Estate and construction firms in Venezuela and Aruba, officially opened their new jewel in the presence of the invitees.

Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. A state-of-the-art lobby, an ocean-view gym, bar service, rooftop with 360 degrees view of Oranjestad, on-site parking, 24-hours security and a top floor lounge area with Jacuzzi's. Cherry on the cake: an infinity pool with a panorama on the harbour.

Harbour House Aruba officially open! 80 % sold, construction in final phase: Harbour House Aruba is ready for you!

Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. To see exactly what still is available you may check the website which shows you a map with sold and open units. Updates on construction are also on forehand. When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on their website,



it is a lot easier.

Hottest condo in town

Aruba Today talked to one of the owners from New York: "This is going to be the hottest condo building on the island because this is the very first thing people see when they arrive here by cruise ship and it is the only one combining the ocean, port and city. We feel so happy to be the owner here, also, the organization is amazing. We are being accommodated in every way, the attention you get is extraordinary."

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Living here includes being part of Oranjestad and all its benefits. Around the Harbour House building a boardwalk is constructed allowing you to stroll along the waterfront and enjoy a drink on a terrace or dive into the art gallery, souvenir store or even have dinner facing the atmospheric harbour of Oranjestad. The process of purchase is easy, whether you are abroad or on the island. Make an appointment through the website to visit the sales office when you

are here. In that way you can actually see the unit, materials and amenities. If you are not on the island the website can help you out and the sales office is happy to send you all needed documentation for you to orientate. When agreed upon the unit you sign an agreement and move forward with the down payment which is \$ 50.000. At receipt of that amount the sales is closed and the price will not change. You know what you get and will not be surprised by price changes. The payment agreements after the deposit will be discussed and are flexible. Harbour House Aruba assist also in financing by banks. □

For more information:
<https://harbourhousearuba.com>.

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Origin of Papiamento- Aruba's native language

ORANJESTAD — Papiamento, Creole language of ABC (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao) is from the Cape Verdean Creole family (Cape Verdean language) and was taken to the Caribbean in the 9th century by the Cape Verdeans of that time (linings and slaves), experts in cane culture and sugar production, and who were hired by Jewish entrepreneurs who went to invest in this business in the Caribbean. Cape Verdeans taught this pre-industrial revolution technology (planting cane and producing sugar, which they had learned from Madeirans) to slaves from other African regions, and did so in their language, Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language), hence the language implanted in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

Unlike many interesting stories, wanting to link Papiamento directly to Portuguese, Galician or Castilian (see Papiamento, on Wikipedia - Portuguese version and Spanish version, where the Portuguese and Spanish, each claim the direct origin of Papiamento), in fact, this is not true. Papiamento is not direct from Portuguese, Galician or Castilian, it is from the Cape Verde Creole family (Cape Verdean language). You can see this best when it's saying obscene words and offending someone, precisely as they say today in both ABC and Cape Verde islands. The obscene words kept the original, had no

lexical influence either from Castilian or Dutch. Also the PapiCristang of Malacca, the Patuá of Macau, and several creoles from the east (from Daman, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia) and Africa (Casamança, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, these last two releases to the English), all originated in the Creole of Cabo Verde (Cape Verdean language), which was the French language spoken in Portuguese feitorias on the coast of Africa (from Senegal to Sierra Leone), and which was taken east by the thousands of cable - Verdeans (linings and slaves, already Christianized and speaking Creole) who served as sailors and "slaves of arms" in Portuguese caravels, demanding the east. I don't know why the official history of Portugal usually omits this fact, which is in the chronicles of the quinrentist chroniclers, but which we never saw in the history of Portugal that we study from primary education to higher education. However, it has always been tried to deceive us, in colonial time, that we were descendants of Viriato (Iberian hero in the fight against the Romans) and the pastors of the Hermine Mountains, but not much speaking of our black-African ancestry.

We Cape Verdeans understand each other very well with these Antillans and Easterns, whose language is from the same Creole family of Cape Verde (Cape Verdean



language), speaking their Creole and we ours. Therefore, Papiamento, PapiCristang, PatuáMaçaense and the creoles, said of Portuguese origin, Daman, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, some locations in the Philippines and some places in Indonesia, are creoles of the language family Cape Verde Creole (Cape Verdean language) and indirectly the Galaico-Duriense or Galaico-Portuguese, a language that the people spoke in Portugal in the 6th and 7th century.

Anonymous
Source: Dushi Aruba



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Where to Find the Anchor?

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea.

Where to Find the Anchor?

The anchor is a “must see” landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when your visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.

The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the “T” junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

About the Anchor

Size

It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos, is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the “fluke” or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the Anchor Come From?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

Story 1:

“According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships await-



ing orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain.”

Story 2:

“Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them.”

How Did The Anchor Become a Landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Marti-

nus – the Harbormaster of Aruba; Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis – Owner of Filtec at Zeewijk in San Nicolas), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr. at his famous Charlie's Bar and Restaurant in San Nicolas. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The “anchor”, which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated “To All Seamen” on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

Through the Years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Chralies Brouns Jr died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery, graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated “To All Seamen” in a formal ceremony in memory of Charlaes Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

The Best Time to Visit

When your planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (I will recommend other places below). With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. □

OPEC+ alliance boosts oil production as energy prices soar

LONDON (AP) — The OPEC oil cartel and allied producing countries including Russia will raise production by 648,000 barrels per day in July and August, offering modest relief for a global economy suffering from soaring energy prices.

The cost of oil, which began to rise sharply to start of the year, spiked after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine. U.S. crude prices are now up 54% since the beginning of the year, and international crude prices are up almost 40% in that time.

Gasoline prices have risen in tandem and hit another all-time high in the U.S. Thursday.

That's become a potential problem for U.S. President Joe Biden in mid-term Congressional elections this fall. Elevated prices are also a threat to the global economy as it emerges from the pandemic, with both companies and families potentially reducing activity to deflect those costs.

OPEC, whose de facto leader is Saudi Arabia, had for months resisted pressure from the White House to increase oil supply more quickly. That stance, along with a European Union agreement to end most oil imports from Russia, has pushed prices higher. Gasoline and diesel prices



The logo of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is seen outside of OPEC's headquarters in Vienna, Austria, on March 3, 2022.

have also been rising due to a lack of refining capacity to turn crude into motor fuel.

The US "welcomes" the increased production, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a prepared statement. "The United States will continue to use all tools at our disposal to address energy prices pressures."

Biden administration officials have recently visited Saudi Arabia for talks on energy supplies and re-

gional security issues.

The decision Thursday steps up the pace by the alliance, known as OPEC+, in restoring cuts made during the worst of the pandemic recession. The group had been adding a steady 432,000 barrels per day each month to gradually restore production cuts from 2020.

The increase did not appear to ease concerns about tight supply and oil prices actually rose after the decision was an-

nounced Thursday.

U.S. crude, which had fallen by as much as \$3 per barrel early in the day, reversing course and traded up almost 2% at \$117.15. International benchmark Brent rose 0.7% at \$117.02. Market traders may have expected more from the meeting, such as an indication from Saudis that they could make up for any shortfall due to sanctions against Russia.

Instead the alliance's statement merely mentioned

reopening from COVID-19 lockdowns in "major global economic centers" and the end of seasonal maintenance work at refineries as justifications for the incremental increase. Lockdowns in Shanghai and Beijing have sapped fuel demand in China.

OPEC+ decisions have been complicated by the group's failure to meet its production targets due to underinvestment and other roadblocks in some member countries. Actual production has lagged the scheduled increases.

The U.S. saw a record high average gasoline pump price on Thursday of \$4.71 per gallon, according to AAA. The price of crude makes up about half the price of gasoline at the pump in the U.S., and prices could go even higher as the summer driving season gets under way. High gas prices for drivers are a potential factor in U.S. politics with mid-term Congressional elections approaching later this year.

In Germany, the government has sought to soften the blow to consumer finances from energy inflation by launching deeply discounted transit passes that enable unlimited use of local trains, subways and buses for 9 euros (\$10) per month. □

Associated Press

Amazon to close Kindle bookstore in China, halt device sale

Associated Press

Amazon said Thursday that it will shut down its digital Kindle bookstores in China and stop selling the device to retailers in the country to readjust the focus of its business.

The company said in a post on the popular messaging app WeChat that the digital bookstore will stop operating on June 30, 2023. Customers in China will not be able to buy new e-books after that day and won't be able to download books they've already purchased after a year later, the company said. It noted that it will offer refunds for Chinese customers who bought a Kindle this year.

Amazon's announcement comes as foreign technology companies have been pulling out or downsizing their operations in China as a strict data privacy law specifying how companies collect and store data takes effect. Such pullbacks have come from companies including Airbnb, Yahoo and Microsoft's LinkedIn, which shuttered the Chinese version of its site last year and replaced it with a jobs board with no social networking functions. However, Amazon said its other businesses in China will continue.

"Amazon China's long-term commitment to customers will not change," the post

said.

"We have established a broad business base in China and will continue to innovate and invest."

"As a global business, Amazon is focused on delivering valuable products and services to customers through innovation. At the same time, we continue to adjust the strategic focus of our own business and continue to make efforts in the areas that customers need," the company said in another statement posted on its official Weibo account.

The e-commerce giant went on to emphasize its cross-border e-commerce efforts in China, as well as its cloud computing technolo-



Customers stand near a display of Kindle electronic readers at the opening day for Amazon Books, the first brick-and-mortar retail store for online retail giant Amazon, Nov. 3, 2015, in Seattle.

Associated Press

gies and services. Amazon also said that it had 10,000 employees in China, with

offices in 12 cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou and Shenzhen. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Museum

1 Raucous piece
bird 43 Slip

6 Accords 44 Boring

11 Find too
cute 45 Flight

12 Maui units
greeting 46 Periphery

13 Fountain
treat

14 Lament 1 Prepared

15 That lady potatoes 9 Spool stuff 31 Swift

16 Did the
walls 2 Stick 10 Yellow- work

18 Hosp. feature 17 "That's it!" separators

19 That lady 4 Torah 22 Cloth 33 Long- eared

20 Put into cabinet scrap mammals

21 Some sheds 24 Crooner Tormé 35 Hardly

bucks 6 Coddles 26 Some wordy

23 Ready for 7 Baby swords 38 Resting

battle wipe 28 Vacation on

25 Pitch's additive spot 42 Final part

27 Brief time

28 Daughter of Lear

30 Highlands girl

33 Spell

34 Lobster trap

36 Keg need

37 "Royal Wedding" star

39 One — time

40 Way to go



Yesterday's answer

8 College 29 Negative

listing link

9 Spool stuff 31 Swift

10 Yellow- work

gray 32 Word

17 "That's it!" separators

22 Cloth 33 Long- eared

24 Crooner mammals

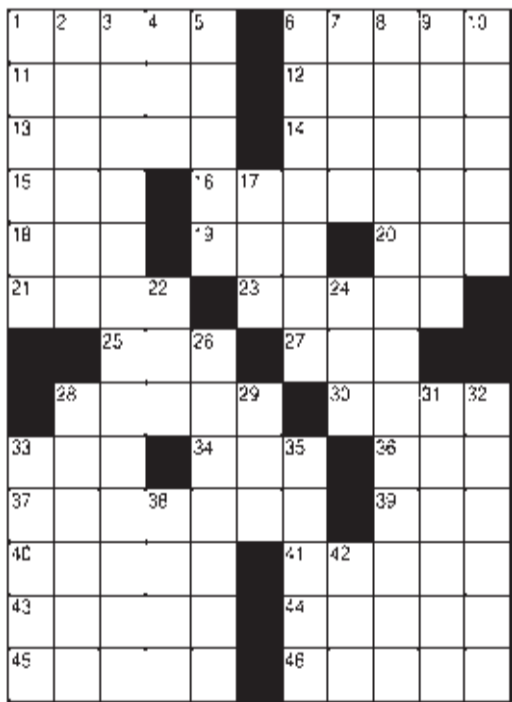
Tormé 35 Hardly

26 Some wordy

38 Resting

28 Vacation on

42 Final part



6-3

AXYDLBAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-3 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

ELD ZUO'S ADE QUWWHOMRR.

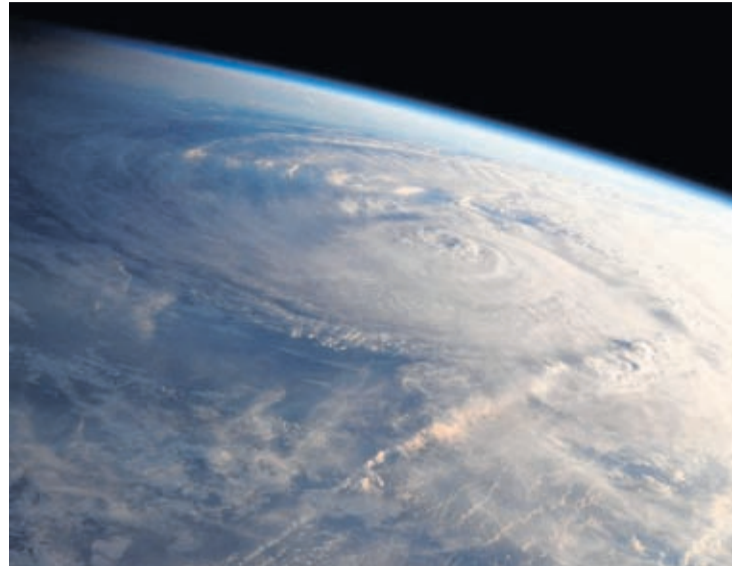
ADS ELD ZUO ADE FLODSR.

UOF SQUS'R NHOF LK SQM

RUGM SQHOT. — DONOLYO

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: AND WHAT IS SO RARE AS A DAY IN JUNE? THEN, IF EVER, COME PERFECT DAYS. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Experts: Everything points to another busy hurricane season



This photo made available by NASA shows Hurricane Harvey over Texas on Saturday, Aug. 26, 2017, seen from the International Space Station.

Associated Press

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

Batten down the hatches for another nasty hurricane season.

Nearly every natural force and a bunch of human-caused ones — more than just climate change — have turned the last several Atlantic hurricane seasons into deadly and expensive whoppers. The season that starts Wednesday looks like another note in a record-breaking refrain because all those ingredients for disaster are still going strong, experts warn.

They say these factors point to but don't quite promise more trouble ahead: the natural climate event La Nina, human-caused climate change, warmer ocean waters, the Gulf of Mexico's deep hot Loop Current, increased storminess in Africa, cleaner skies, a multi-decade active storm cycle and massive development of property along the coast.

"It's everything and the kitchen sink," Colorado State University hurricane

researcher Phil Klotzbach said.

In the past two years, forecasters ran out of names for storms. It's been a costly rogue's gallery of major hurricanes — with winds of at least 111 mph (179 kph) — striking land in the past five years: Harvey, Irma, Maria, Florence, Michael, Dorian, Humberto, Laura, Teddy, Delta, Zeta, Eta, Iota, Grace and Ida.

"That's the pattern that we've been locked into. And what a statistic to think about: From 2017 to 2021, more Category four and five (hurricanes) made U.S. landfall than from 1963 to 2016," National Hurricane Center Director Ken Graham said in an Associated Press interview in front of two hurricane-hunter planes that fly into the storms.

Graham, echoing most experts and every pre-season forecast, said "we've got another busy one" coming. Last year, the Atlantic set a record for six above average hurricane seasons in a row, smashing the old re-

cord of three in a row, and forecasters predict a seventh. The only contrary sign is that for the first time since 2014, a storm didn't form before the official June 1 start of the hurricane season, but forecasters are watching the Eastern Pacific's record-setting Hurricane Agatha that looks likely to cross over land and reform as Alex in the Gulf of Mexico later this week. Here's what may make the Atlantic chaotic this season:

LA NINA

One of the biggest influences on Atlantic hurricane seasons occurs half a world away in the temporarily cooling waters of the equatorial Pacific, the natural cyclical phenomenon called La Nina, the more dangerous for the United States flip side to El Nino.

La Nina alters weather across the world, including making hurricane development in the Atlantic more likely. It starts with the Sahel region of Africa, where the seeds of the many of the strongest mid-season hurricanes, called Cape Verde storms, form. That often dry region is wet and stormy in La Nina and that helps with early formation.

One weather feature that can decapitate storms or prevent them from forming in the first place is high cross winds called shear. But La Nina pretty much deadens shear, which is "a huge factor" for more storm activity, University of Albany hurricane researcher Kristen Corbosiero said.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Studies show that climate change is making hurricanes wetter, because warm air can hold more moisture, and are making the strongest storms a bit stronger. Storms also may be stalling more, allowing them to drop more rain over the same place, like in 2017's Harvey, where more than 50 inches (127 centimeters) fell in one spot. They are also rapidly intensifying more often, experts say.

Continued on next page

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Continued from previous page

While studies point to an increasing number of the strongest storms because of human-caused climate change, scientists still disagree over what global warming means for the overall frequency of all storms. Some scientists see a slight decrease because of fewer weaker storms, but others, such as MIT hurricane researcher Kerry Emanuel, see an overall increase in the total number of storms.

A study by Emanuel found a general increase in Atlantic storm s over 150 years, with some exceptions. That increase is too large to be directly linked to climate change, Emanuel said, "but it could be indirectly related to climate change" especially if global warming is changing ocean circulation speeds as suspected.

WARMER WATER

Warm water acts as fuel for hurricanes. Storms can't form until waters hit 79 degrees (26 degrees Celsius) and the deeper the warm water reaches, and the higher its temperature, the more the hurricane has to feed on.

And because of climate change and natural weather variables, the water in much of the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico is warm and inviting for storms, University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy said. In the key storm formation area, waters are about half a degree warmer (0.3 degrees Celsius) than last year at this time of year, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hurricane seasonal forecaster Matthew Rosenkrans.

LOOP CURRENT

In the Gulf of Mexico there's a normal phenomenon called the Loop Current, where warm water runs extremely deep. That's important because usually hurricanes bring up cold deep water when they go over warm water and that limits their strengthening. But the Loop Current often turbocharges storms and it sheds eddies of warm deep water all over the Gulf for storm intensification.



Lt. Commander Sam Urato, a P-3 pilot of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, points to decals on the fuselage of the Lockheed WP-3D Orion 'hurricane hunter' aircraft representing the hurricanes it has penetrated during a hurricane awareness tour at Washington National Airport, Arlington, Va., Tuesday, May 3, 2022. Hurricane season starts Wednesday, June 1, 2022, and it's looking busy because every factor out there is pointing to another nasty year in the Atlantic.

Associated Press

This year the loop current seems especially strong, northward and worrisome, Emanuel and other experts said. They compared it to the Loop Current that intensified Camille in 1969, Katrina in 2005 and Ida last year.

On Monday the Loop Current was 1.8 degrees (1 degree Celsius) warmer than normal, McNoldy said.

CLEANER AIR

Traditional air pollution from factories and cars — the dirty air of smog and small particles — reflects sunlight and cools the atmosphere, scientists say. That cooling effect from air pollution probably helped decrease the number of storms in the 1970s and 1980s, which was a quiet period in the Atlantic.

But since Europe and the United States cleaned up much of their air pollution,

the Atlantic has gotten stormier during hurricane season, while just the opposite is happening in Asia where air pollution is increasing, a new study said. Experts said the decrease in air pollution and increase in Atlantic storms is likely a permanent condition now.

LONGER TERM CYCLES

Hurricane researchers have noticed over a century or so, an on-off type of cycle of storm activity with about 20 to 30 years of busy Atlantic hurricane seasons followed by 20 to 30 years of less activity. The current busy cycle started in 1995 and should theoretically be ending soon, but scientists see no sign of that happening yet.

The theory behind the cycle has to do with ocean currents, salinity and other natural cycles on a global scale. □

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The pain and beauty of 'Crimes of the Future'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**
AP Film Writer

Pain is an essentially a thing of the past for some in David Cronenberg's "Crimes of the Future," a dense, gorgeous and grotesque meditation on bodies, creation and art. Suffering, however, is still alive and well as everyone grapples with the enormity of that fact that human evolution has "gone wrong."

It may be more mystifying than illuminating when all is said and done, but it is certainly a uniquely captivating experience with wildly imaginative creations, interesting performances, challenging ideas and one of the best scores of the year.

Cronenberg, whose name is forever destined and doomed to be mentioned any time any filmmaker attempts to put their spin on "body horror," went viral for a comment in which he predicted that some people would walk out of this film within the first five minutes. He didn't mean every audience, he'd go on to clarify, just a party-seeking festival audience who either wasn't familiar with or didn't care to be open to his work. Still, it's the kind of provocative comment that seems like a dare, and not one to take lightly from the man who made "The Fly," "Crash" and "Videodrome." And, indeed, something



This image released by Neon shows Léa Seydoux, background, and Viggo Mortensen in a scene from "Crimes of the Future."

quite disturbing does happen in the first five minutes. But the way he depicts the horrific deed is done with enough gravity to dispel any worries about it being there for exploitative shock value. It simply makes you intrigued about where this is all going. And it's helped along by Howard Shore's mournful, masterful score. This is a world in which bodies are mutating. Viggo Mortensen, playing Saul Tenser, forms new and novel organs regularly. Instead of simply removing the un-

invited guests at a hospital, he and his partner Caprice (Léa Seydoux) have turned it into an opportunity for performance art. Invasive surgery and pain management have become things that individuals do themselves, with the help of custom, alien-like machines that hold and manipulate your body and anticipate pain. Saul's surgery, which Caprice performs, is a public spectacle, heavy with meaning and metaphor. His extracted organs be-

come specimens for display. And it's not nearly as repulsive or punishing as it might sound — take it from this extremely squeamish critic who went in with an empty stomach, bracing for the absolute worst. It could have been pretty horrifying, too: There's blood and scalpels, expectant flesh (Mortensen's torso almost deserves a supporting credit), incisions galore, pulsating organs, gagging, drills, purple vomit, cloudy saliva and a man with ears

all over his body performing a modern dance. But, like the first five minutes, "Crimes of the Future" does not seem to have been crafted to shock and disturb. Cheap thrills are for the newbies.

Cronenberg has things he wants to say: About art, about pain, about self sacrifice, about evolution, about creativity, about ethics, about sex and about beauty.

There is a lot of plot and conspiracy swirling around Caprice and Saul, including a secretive new government department called the National Organ Registry and the two weirdos (Kristen Stewart and Don McKellar) who work there. Stewart's rule-abiding and small-voiced Timlin, whom Caprice calls "especially creepy," becomes a lusty superfan after seeing their show. There are some strange technicians, played by Tanaya Beatty and Nadia Litz, and the grieving father (Scott Speedman) of a dead boy skulking around their shows, and a detective (Welket Bungué) adding a noir element to the proceedings. While I'll never fault a movie for having a lot on its mind, "Crimes of the Future" does also often feel like it's about everything and nothing. It's endlessly quotable and also hard to fully digest in one sitting. □

Associated Press

Prize-winning Texas drama teacher to get special Tony Award



Roshunda Jones-Koumba, a drama teacher at G. W. Carver Magnet High School in Houston, appears in an undated photo. Jones-Koumba will receive the 2022 Excellence in Theatre Education Award.

Associated Press

By **MARK KENNEDY**

NEW YORK (AP) — The special Tony Award that honors educators will go to a drama teacher in Texas who argues that "musical theater has a unique way of bringing people together."

Roshunda Jones-Koumba, the theater director at G.W. Carver Magnet High School in Houston will receive the 2022 Excellence in Theatre Education Award on June 12 at the Tony Awards in New York City.

The annual education award bestowed by the Tony Awards and Carnegie Mellon University recog-

nizes U.S. educators from kindergarten to 12th grade who have "demonstrated monumental impact on the lives of students and who embodies the highest standards of the profession."

"In theater we accept all, so you're not afraid to be yourself. And that gives you confidence to do anything you want, enables you to work with different people, and to be a better all-around person," Jones-Koumba said in a statement. "Theatre is Life. I'm very grateful to The Tony Awards and Carnegie Mellon University for this honor."

The award includes a \$10,000 prize and a pair of tickets to the Tony ceremony and gala. A panel of judges comprised of the American Theatre Wing, The Broadway League, Carnegie Mellon and other leaders from the theater industry selects the winner, based on candidates submitted by the public.

Jones-Koumba has already received two prestigious awards for 2021— the Stephen Schwartz Musical Theatre Teacher of the Year Award and the International Thespian Society Inspirational Theatre Educator Award. □

Brittney Griner receiving, answering WNBA players' emails

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

Brittney Griner can't play with her WNBA colleagues. She can't call them, either. But she can write.

In one small bit of normalcy, Griner has been able to receive emails and letters from WNBA players during her detainment in Russia. Hundreds of emails have been sent by players to an account Griner's agent set up to allow them to communicate with her.

It's not easy: The emails are printed out and delivered sporadically in bunches to Griner by her lawyer after they are vetted by Russian officials. Griner doesn't have access to the email account; she'll either write a response on paper and her lawyers will take a photo of it or she'll dictate a response if she doesn't have any paper.

Los Angeles Sparks forward Amanda Zahui B. never thought she'd hear back from Griner when she sent an email to the Phoenix Mercury center a few months ago.

"When she responded to my second letter it blew me away," Zahui B. said. "I was like she responded!! In my third letter, I was like 'hey best friend, we are officially



Phoenix Mercury's Brittney Griner (42) is congratulated on a play against the Seattle Storm in the first half of the second round of the WNBA basketball playoffs Sunday, Sept. 26, 2021, in Everett, Wash.

Associated Press

best friends now." Like so many WNBA players, Zahui B. wanted Griner to know she was thinking about her as the two-time Olympic gold medalist remains, in the view of U.S. officials, wrongfully detained in Russia.

Griner has been detained for 105 days after vape cartridges containing oil derived from cannabis were allegedly found in her

luggage at an airport near Moscow.

When Zahui B. got her first response from Griner it made her smile and she promised herself she would send more notes. And she has, sending them every few weeks. So have many other players.

"We just don't want her to think she's forgotten," Liberty center Stefanie Dolson said.

It's not just emails being sent to Griner; Diana Taurasi actually sent a hand-written letter to her Mercury and Olympic teammate.

Griner's agent Lindsay Kagawa Colas said the letters have been a way for the 6-foot-9 center to stay connected to her WNBA family.

Some players just offer hopes and prayers for Griner's release and say they

are thinking about her. Others send Sudoku puzzles or more personal notes.

"She jokes in her letters. I don't know how she does it with what she's going through. She's an amazing soul," Zahui B. said. "She brings light in a situation like this. I don't think a lot of people could manage to do that."

Zahui B., who jokingly admitted she tends to ramble, sent Griner updates on her daily activities describing such mundane things as getting her nails done or what she ate for lunch.

She wasn't extremely close with Griner when they both played in the WNBA and in Europe, but got to know her better over time. Griner sent a video to Zahui B.'s mom offering support when she was battling breast cancer and another one for her 60th birthday a few years ago.

Griner, who last responded to the Sparks player last week, signed it "From 42 to 42" when Zahui B. told her she was switching her number to 42 in honor of the center.

While writing letters has come naturally to Zahui B., other players says it is tough to find the words to put pen to paper. □

Matsuyama disqualified for too much paint on his 3-wood

By DOUG FERGUSON

DUBLIN, Ohio (AP) — Former Masters champion Hideki Matsuyama was disqualified Thursday when officials determined he had too much paint on the face of his 3-wood that he was using for alignment.

It was the first time Matsuyama, who won the Memorial in 2014 for his first PGA Tour victory, had ever been disqualified on the PGA Tour.

Chief referee Steve Rintoul said rules officials were made aware of 10 small lines forming a circle on the face of his 3-wood. Matsuyama had just teed off at Muirfield Village and was approached on the second hole.

It's OK to have a non-conforming club in the bag as

long as it hasn't been used. Matsuyama said he used it for his opening tee shot.

Rintoul said he met him on the fifth fairway to talk to the Japanese star and to take pictures of the club. He then brought in the USGA and the tour's equipment standards leader to make sure, and the result was disqualification.

The alignment aid was not at issue, rather the substance used to create the lines was thick enough that it could affect the flight of the ball.

Rule 4.1-a(3) states players cannot hit a shot with a club that has been changed "by applying any substance to the clubhead (other than in cleaning it) to affect how it performs in making a stroke."

Rintoul described the substance as white-out used in fixing typographical errors on paper.

"There was a lot of white," he said. "A white-out substance that was very much up on the face of the club, which, really, it's very clear in equipment rules that is not allowed."

He said he closed his eyes and rubbed his fingernail across the face of the club. In one direction he could feel the paint, and the other direction he couldn't.

"It was thick enough you could pick up on where it was on the face," he said. Rintoul said someone in the golf industry whom he declined to identify pointed out pictures of Matsuyama's club that had been taken a few days



Hideki Matsuyama, of Japan, watches his shot on the ninth fairway during the first round of the Memorial golf tournament, Thursday, June 2, 2022, in Dublin, Ohio.

Associated Press

ago. They reached Matsuyama too late to keep him from using the club in competition.

"But the damage was done on the first hole," Rintoul said. "Just unfortunate set

of circumstances for Hideki, for sure."

Matsuyama left after nine holes — he was 3-over par — without comment. His next tournament is the U.S. Open in two weeks. □

Coco Gauff, 18, to face No. 1 Swiatek in French Open final



Coco Gauff of the U.S. returns the ball to Italy's Martina Trevisan during their semifinal match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium Thursday, June 2, 2022 in Paris.

PARIS (AP) — In some ways, Coco Gauff is very much a typical 18-year-old, striding into Court Philippe Chatrier for her French Open semifinal on Thursday with earbuds in place, listening to a playlist she explained is "called 'Rap' — and I can't say the next word." And in some ways, she is an old soul, anything but a run-of-the-mill teen — or run-of-the-mill tennis player. So when Gauff had wrapped up her 6-3, 6-1 victory over Martina Trevisan to reach her first Grand Slam final, setting up a showdown against No.

1-ranked Iga Swiatek on Saturday, the American thought of the recent spate of mass shootings in her home country and wrote in marker on a courtside TV camera: "Peace. End gun violence." "I woke up this morning, and I saw there was another shooting, and I think it's just crazy. I know that it's getting more attention now. But ... this has been an issue, at least in my head, for a long time, and I definitely think there needs to be some reform put into place," Gauff said. "I think now especially, being 18, I've really been trying to educate myself around certain situations, because now I have the right to vote and I want to use that wisely." A willingness to speak out about issues of significance, and a wide-lens view of the world, reflect the sort of maturity that has served her well, especially with so much attention from such a young age. She won the French Open junior title at 14. She became the youngest qualifier in Wimbledon history and then beat Ve-

nus Williams on the way to the fourth round there at 15. "From what I see on court, she's developing every year, basically," said Swiatek, the champion at Roland Garros in 2020 and on a 34-match winning streak after eliminating No. 20 Daria Kasatkina 6-2, 6-1 on Thursday. "And when I see her, I tend to forget that she's 18." Ah, but she is. When Gauff arrived in Paris a little more than two weeks ago, she celebrated her recent high school graduation by posing for cap-and-gown photos near the Eiffel Tower while holding her diploma. Now she's the youngest player to reach a major title match since Maria Sharapova won Wimbledon at 17 in 2004. Gauff has won all 12 sets she's played, although she did not need to navigate the most arduous path to get this. Because of all manner of surprising results and early exits by top players from the bracket, she has faced only one seeded foe, No. 31 Elise Mertens. Big serves that reached

115 mph against Trevisan, a terrific backhand and a still-improving forehand are the keys to the 18th-seeded Gauff's game. Trevisan also praised Gauff's defense, likening facing her to hitting against a wall — every ball comes back. Now, in Swiatek, comes someone who will present a much tougher test. The only Polish player to win a major singles title hasn't lost since February, stringing together five tournaments in a row; only Venus Williams, who won 35 consecutive matches in 2000, has a longer unbeaten stretch this century. "I'm just trying to treat these matches as any other matches," Swiatek said, "because it is stressful, and I accept that. But I want to keep doing the same work." The men's semifinals are Friday, with 13-time French Open champion Rafael Nadal playing No. 3 seed Alexander Zverev, and 2014 U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic facing No. 8 Casper Ruud. With only faint wisps of

clouds overhead and the temperature hovering around 75 degrees Fahrenheit (about 25 Celsius), the two women's semifinals followed a similar pattern. Swiatek-Kasatkina was at 2-all. Then Swiatek claimed 10 of the last 11 games. Gauff-Trevisan was at 3-all. Then Gauff claimed nine of the last 10 games. Trevisan is a 28-year-old left-hander who entered the day on a 10-match winning streak, including her first career WTA title at Rabat, Morocco, a week before play began at Roland Garros. She also defeated Gauff the only previous time they played — in the second round in Paris two years ago. There were brief blips of tension Thursday that had little to do with the score. Trevisan was surprised when chair umpire Marijana Veljovic cautioned her about grunting — "I always play like this," the Italian said — after the official was asked by Gauff whether it was OK that her opponent's cries of "Ahhhh!" were stretching into Gauff's racket swings. Gauff questioned Veljovic about a couple of line calls, drawing whistles and boos from spectators who frowned on that sort of thing. After one such interaction, Trevisan broke serve to pull even at 3-3. Unbothered, Gauff broke right back to lead 4-3, smacking a backhand winner that brought Mom and Dad out of their seats in the player guest box. Now there's one match left to determine a champion: the dominant Swiatek against the precocious Gauff. "I'm in a mindset now like: 'It doesn't matter.' I mean, I'm going to be happy, regardless. My parents are going to love me, regardless. So I'm just going to go into it like another match," Gauff said. "I mean, yeah, it's a Grand Slam final, but there are so many things going on in the world right now, and especially in the U.S. a lot of stuff is happening right now, so I think it's not important to stress over a tennis match." □

Associated Press

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